

Bryden's Birth Story

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Tuesday morning, April 26th, I dropped my middle son at preschool and went to run a few errands. About halfway through my shopping expedition I started to feel off. Nothing in particular or specific, just a sudden conviction that I was having a baby TODAY.

A short time later I was feeling a little damp - not wet like water breaking, or even like water leaking (it broke in a gush with my first, late in labor, and in a slow trickle before active labor began with my second) just feeling damp and this sense of foreboding.

So, as I was leaving the store I called my mom and asked her if she had her bag packed to come and stay with the boys. She said "no, not yet, why?" and I told her I thought she should pack and give me a call in a little while. Then I called my husband, who answered his phone (thinking he was being smart) with "So, did your water break?" "UMMMM maybe, probably not, but I think you should come home." Finally, I called Dotti, who was on her way to Pueblo (about 45 minutes South) to set up a birth pool. I told her I was feeling like something was off and I might be leaking, so she turned back.

I went home. My husband arrived a few minutes after me and helped me to unload the groceries and other plunder from my car. I went and changed my clothes to something more comfortable and put on a maxi pad (mistake! If you are wearing a pad and aren't sure if you're leaking - you have no idea how MUCH you may or may not be leaking!) Nothing really seemed to be happening. It was about 10:00 a.m., maybe 10:30.

My husband went to the preschool to pick up our middle son. My labor with him (#2) was VERY quick and my husband was worried that if he didn't leave soon, there might be no one to pick the poor kid up when his school-day ended. My mom wouldn't be in the Springs before he got out of school. I moped about the house feeling off, sat down at the computer and ordered mother's day gifts for our mothers, and generally putzed around. There was still nothing happening in the way of contractions or anything else - other than that continued vague feeling of "off-ness".

I talked to Dotti a couple of times in this time period - she was back in town and since I didn't seem to be in imminent need she went to do a postpartum visit with the woman who delivered the day before. I agreed that this was a good idea, and asked that she keep her phone on. When I talked to her again I mentioned my general uncertainty about the whole thing and she said that if my water was broken I'd have to go to the hospital if labor hadn't started in 12 hours (state regulations governing midwifery require it). I was really upset by that and nearly in tears. We discussed the possibility of moving things along with nipple stimulation if things didn't pick up soon. I was already pretty sure by this point that my water had NOT broken but I still felt deep down that this was it.

My husband returned and my mom arrived around 11:30. We had some lunch and just hung out doing stuff around the house. My husband and I decided that it would be a good time to go out and walk - we walked around the neighborhood a little bit, just a few blocks. I was starting to have a few scattered contractions but nothing worth keeping track of. I was still not convinced I was in labor, and I was really upset over not knowing if I'd have to go to a hospital in a few hours since we hadn't checked the possible "fluid" which was no longer really leaking.

Around 2:00 I went and took a little bath and tried to get my head on straight.

Around 3:00 contractions started for real. I started watching them and told my husband to start timing them around 3:30. We expected Dotti to call next at about 4:00. By then, contractions were in a good solid, every 4-5 minute pattern, lasting about a minute each. (I still have the sheet my anal husband wrote all the details on - I'm going to scrapbook it!) By the time Dotti arrived contractions were starting to get a little stronger but holding steady at 4-5 minutes. Compared to my labor with my second, this was a dream labor - regular contractions, I could walk, talk, laugh and kiss my husband in between. In a really fast labor like I had with #2, contractions were relentless, one on top of another. I even helped my oldest with his homework a little while in labor. Okay I admit, I probably wasn't really terribly helpful but I tried.

After a while the contractions seemed to be a bit more in my back and I was a little concerned about back labor, but I knew that baby had been beautifully anterior and engaged just a couple of days before and I really didn't think the baby had turned. Still, the labor was settling into my back and starting to get rugged. So, I got into the pool and lounged through a few contractions. The pool made a big difference.

Dotti arrived at some point around then and we discussed a cervical exam. We decided to go ahead and check dilation - 4 cms. It seemed like some progress (although we hadn't done any checks before that so, who knows, I could have been a 4 for weeks). Bobbie (Dotti's apprentice) arrived shortly later and they both changed into their scrubs and relaxed at the

dining room table, as I didn't really feel the need for them to be in the room where I was relaxing in the birthing pool. Dotti checked my blood pressure occasionally and baby's heart tones with a water Doppler (assume that's happening at regular intervals through the rest of the labor story off and on - I don't remember when it happened just that it did. It really seemed non-invasive and I didn't take too much note of the occurrence.)

Then the labor started really getting stronger and I shocked myself by really leaning hard on my husband! I wouldn't even let him leave the room between contractions for fear he wouldn't get back before the next one. With every contraction, I leaned into his shoulder, held onto his arms just above the elbow HARD and later asked him to do counter-pressure. He was amazing. He stayed right with me and was really on top of things. One time he tried to leave to brush his teeth (because I told him to! He had eaten a peanut butter sandwich and the smell of peanut butter was off-putting to me.) I know he did eventually escape for a few minutes to take care of that but don't remember when it happened.

Somewhere around this point I ate some toast and something else and I had been drinking Gatorade all along to stay hydrated. I am not sure I'm remembering all these events in order but hey - this is stuff that happened while I was in labor, so that counts as birth story, right?

Somewhere around this time things started getting to be pretty intense and my husband and my mom decided between them (with some semi-coherent labor-land consultation with me) that the boys should leave, so my mom took them to Chuck E Cheese with a handful of cash and tokens that my husband gave her. I remember shortly before they left that I stopped and got up to give the boys a hug, and a contraction hit while I was hugging my oldest son - he wrapped his arms around me and me around him and rocked with me through the contraction. Then they left.

At one point I said to my husband "I don't know if I can do this?" He said "Do you want to go to a hospital?" I said "no" and that was the only real moment of feeling out of control, I guess is the right words, maybe doubt?

I don't know. Pretty normal moment in any labor, I guess.

At another point, between contractions he was holding me and saying good things and making me laugh, it was such an amazing moment for us.

All through this I was in the tub, getting out occasionally to go to the bathroom. My husband was outside the tub, near the edge - kneeling or standing. I took more or less the same position for just about every contraction - on my knees, leaning forward, arms on his. (The Aquadoula pool is the PERFECT height for that, by the way.) Obviously, this wasn't very comfortable for him, so what was his solution? He spotted and pulled up the birthing stool that was sitting off in one corner with Dotti's supplies. This cracked me up. My big husband squatting on a birth stool struck me as a really funny thing. He was consistently amazing throughout this labor.

Late in the evening (it was dark and probably about 7:00 p.m. based on what followed but I could be off - I have no real sense of time related to these events) I realized I was about to vomit. I really, really didn't want to get out of the pool, but I really, really didn't want to stay there and vomit - plus I needed to go to the bathroom. I called Bobbie in and she took me to the bathroom. I went to the bathroom and then cried for an emesis bowl. Bobbie is GOOD - she got it there in the nick of time and I threw up quite a bit - which I know is a good sign, and helps labor progress but it sure felt hellish, especially as I was stuck in the bathroom wet and kinda uncomfortably temperature sensitive (I was not really cold - I guess I was not 'in my brain' enough to distinguish "cold" but very aware that the temperature was DIFFERENT than that of the pool.) I really wanted to get back to the pool but I needed to finish throwing up and going to the bathroom.

I finished and started to move back and Dotti decided it'd be a good time to check heart tones and asked if I want her to check for dilation. So there I was standing in the hall - very aware that I was dripping blood on my carpet (it didn't stain, by the way - Dotti or Bobbie cleaned it up) and annoyed by it, while Dotti was kneeling in front of me taking advantage of my brief stint on dry land to listen to heart-tones, I was leaning heavily on my husband and Bobbie through another contraction - number three since I got out of the pool. Contractions on dry land were quite a jolting difference for me from contractions in the water and I really wanted to get back to the pool!

I shuffled back into the front room where the pool was and decided that I did want to be checked. I lay down on some towels that magically appeared on the floor (more Bobbie I think but I don't remember them being there or getting there) and Dotti checked me and said I was at about an 8. I rolled to my knees just in time for another contraction. I cried for Bobbie and grabbed her shoulders hard. She was so great! It passed and I let Dotti check my blood pressure. I remember saying to her - I feel borderline pushy and I'm pretty sure baby's head is RIGHT THERE.

Suddenly I felt an overwhelming need to get back in the pool - I know this sounds impossible for a laboring woman but I remember it this way - so I HOPPED up and JUMPED over the edge into the pool. Now I am sure it didn't happen that way but it felt that way - just in time for a whopper contraction. I had one more contraction and poof, they stopped.

I realized what this was - the calm before the storm, what Sheila Kitzinger calls "the rest and be thankful" stage. I had never experienced it like this before but I knew that a lot of women find that they have a little break right before the

pushing urge comes on. I reeled back and half-enjoyed the moment of calm with no contractions and half-worried that the next part was about to come. I shouldn't have worried.

After a few minutes of calm, another contraction hit. I grabbed Bobbie's shoulders - she was standing in front of me and pulled her down onto her knees in front of me. My head was more or less on her shoulder and I was upright on my knees over the edge of the pool but comfortably in the water. I had a vague wish that she were my husband but didn't really care - I just wanted to hold onto someone comfortable.

And then it hit -- an overwhelming feeling of my body pushing involuntarily and GUSH. Water broke in full force. Yes, it was underwater but the feeling of the gush was very distinct. Before the contraction was over, baby's head was out. The next contraction moved in very quickly and I had to push but thankfully no one was saying anything, except Dotti saying something that I don't remember. Her hand was on the baby and I felt a really odd sensation and I remember telling her I didn't want her hand there, and she said "Okay." (Later I discovered that she wasn't touching me at all at that point). I am glad I mostly had my back to her because from what I've heard her leaning and nearly falling into the pool was quite comical. Baby's shoulders/body took about two medium hard pushes and then the whole baby was out. 7:40 p.m.

Dotti, and I together moved the baby to my chest. I remember feeling the umbilical cord brush against my leg under the water and thinking that was a weird sensation. And then I was totally in awe of the baby and on a high. Things quieted down for a few minutes and I just held the baby. My husband came over and kissed me and touched the baby. Then he grabbed the camera and took a couple of pics, at my request. Somewhere around this time I heard Dotti say the word "she" and I realized I didn't know if she meant ME or the BABY - so I turned the baby over and looked and A BOY!!!

I delivered the placenta a little while later, still in the pool - Dotti said it was really big, I believe her assessment. She floated it in a bowl for a bit then asked me if I was ready to get out of the tub. I know that I was in there long enough that my husband spoke to both of our moms before I got out of the pool. I decided that I was ready, eventually. The proud new daddy held our beautiful baby boy, Bryden. Bobbie helped me up and out and dried me off. Dotti moved the placenta into some bags for moving it and we made a slow ascent upstairs to our bedroom.

I held Bryden for a little while, then Dotti and Bobbie did the newborn assessments there on my bed. Then the boys got home and they and my mom came in. The boys were dying to hold him but I didn't want them to until we got around to cutting the cord. I let my mom hold him while it was still attached though.

Then Daddy settled down with him and Dotti helped me get into the shower and wash off. While I was in the shower, he let the boys hold the baby briefly and then the boys and my mom went back downstairs.

I felt a world better as Dotti helped me get dressed. I crawled back into the bed with my sweetie and my baby. The boys were downstairs - our middle son was already asleep by this point. We finally went ahead and cut the cord - I was amazed by this process. I don't really remember the older boys' cord cuttings - they were sooner after the birth. It didn't require any clamps or anything since it had completely pulsed out by this point. It even looked different than the other cords I'd seen because of this. Dotti showed my husband where to cut, he cut it. Then Dotti showed me the three vessels inside which I thought was really neat. Then she put a little sterile rubber band on the stump and sprinkled goldenseal on it. I looked at the clock and this was 9:35 p.m. They finished the newborn exams.

My favorite funny moment of the whole episode: during the newborn exam, Dotti took Bryden (who still had worn nothing else but a blanket) and as she was just about to get him dressed he had a nasty meconium bowel movement. It was just pouring out of him -- on his clean clothes, as well as the chux pad he was on. My husband watched this in shock and said "That, right there, was the grossest thing I've seen all day." Since he had been concerned about the mess and "grossness" factor of a homebirth, it was a good thing to hear!

I realized somewhere around that time that I was really hungry, AND that I wanted to go back downstairs to eat since none of us had had dinner. My mom fixed up some dinner. Dotti checked on me and talked me through what to do until she came by the next day, then she and Bobbie gave hugs all the way around and left. My husband and I stayed up eating and talking. After a little while, my husband, Bryden and I made our way upstairs and snuggled down in our bed and that was how we welcomed Bryden to our family.